

making a home for wildlife...

Green Browse Food Plots



before you begin

planning the location

Green browse plots should be a minimum of one acre and located on level ridge tops, bottomlands or along the contour of gentle slopes.

Food plots should make up no more than 5 percent of your total acreage. While larger food plots may benefit heavy deer populations, smaller food plots ensure proper browse for many species through the seasons.

The browse site should be open, tillable and next to suitable cover. Placing the plot at least 60 feet from any woodland edge will reduce competition from trees and allow light to reach the planting.

Green browse plots will increase wildlife traffic including predators. A buffer strip of perennials and shrubs will provide escape cover close to the plot. Shrubs, especially fruit-bearing ones, also provide additional food and browse for wildlife. These extra components may increase the diversity of wildlife, particularly songbirds.

For deer and turkey, green browse plots should be placed $\frac{1}{4}$ mile apart or one per 40-acre tract. For rabbit and quail, plots can be closer, such as 100 to 150 yards apart.

definitions

Green Browse — Living plants that are intentionally planted to attract and feed wildlife species. Green browse plots are often planted with a mix of grass and perennial legumes.

Legume — Any member of the *Fabaceae* family; forbs, shrubs and trees capable of fixing their own supply of nitrogen. Common legumes include red clover, alfalfa and partridge pea.

Soil Inoculant — Bacteria or fungus that are added to soils to enhance plant growth.

benefits

Green browse plots provide wildlife with much-needed bedding, food and brooding sites, and can be customized to attract certain species. Deer and rabbits will feed during the spring, summer and fall while turkeys, pheasants, quail and songbirds will use green browse areas to find insects to feed their young.



calendar

Dates are approximate. Before planting, test soil for pH level. Disk appropriate fertilizers into soil.

Late August or April: Mow.

Sept. – mid Oct. or May: "Green up." Spray glyphosate-based product.

Sept. – Oct. or May 1 – June 10: Plant legume seeds (see page 7).

July 15 – Aug. 1: Mow plot to maintain palatability for wildlife.

Sept. 1 – Oct. 15: Plant wheat (if planting) Note: lespedeza should be planted in the spring.

Three - Four years after last planting: Renovate area if needed.

land preparation

Collect soil samples and test for lime and fertilizer. Inform the tester that the soil test is for wildlife habitat. The pH of the soil should be between 5.5 and 6.5.

The planting site should be free of perennial grasses and broad leaf plants. Seedbed preparation can take place in fall or spring, although fall is preferred. The ground can be prepared in two different ways, either by mowing and spraying or by plowing and disking. If you choose the mowing and spraying method, mow in late August for the fall or April for the spring, then spray the site with glyphosate once it starts to "green up" (4 to 6 inches high). Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.

If you choose the plowing and disking method, the field should be plowed and disked a minimum of 10 days after spraying and within 10 days of planting.

Herbicides should be used sparingly because the goal of the plot is not high yields, like crops. Some weeds in the plot may provide unintentional benefits, such as adding extra cover. It is a delicate balance of having weeds without letting them crowd out the seeds you have planted. It is up to you to find that balance within the plot.

safeguard against soil erosion

If you disk and plow on steep slopes, the soil will be exposed to water and wind. Contact local DNR field offices

and/or NRCS for tips and to make sure your land is protected from erosion.

mixes

special quail mix:

- 2 lbs./acre Partridge Pea
- 2 lbs./acre Red Clover
- 2 lbs./acre Korean Lespedeza

deer, turkey, pheasant:

- 3 lbs./acre Red Clover
- 3 lbs./acre Ladino Clover

Professional wildlife biologists may recommend other mixtures or species. In some cases, disking may be sufficient to provide adequate natural foods. There are specific program requirements for establishing food plots on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land. Consult your local DNR biologist or USDA for further information.

planting

Immediately before planting, disk the field, incorporating fertilizer according to soil recommendations. Planting should be completed within 10 days of preparing the land. In absence of soil test results, a general guideline is 200 pounds of broadcast 6-24-24 fertilizer per acre. Seed should be broadcast at the recommended rate within 24 hours of fertilizing the area. Legume seeds need to be mixed with inoculants. To ensure proper germination,



"A green browse plot is one of the best management tools for many wildlife species on your property, especially for whitetail deer."

—Aaron Palm (above)
Landowner, Van Buren County

seeds should be planted into a firm seedbed no more than ¼-inch below the soil surface. Prepare a firm seedbed by rolling the site before broadcasting the seed, then again after. Be sure the seed is not planted too deeply. Seed sitting on top of the surface after planting is fairly common.

maintenance

Mow once a year after July 15 to create openings for young birds and mammals to sun themselves and to dry off after heavy dews and rains. Mowing will keep the browse appetizing for wildlife. Mowing height should be 4 to 6 inches.

Renovation may be necessary every three to four years if weeds or grasses take over.

information and plant sources

DNR Private Lands Program

www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/privatelands/

